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FM AMEMBASSY HARARE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2956
INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY
RUEHAR/AMEMBASSY ACCRA 2006
RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 2127
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0669
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1404
RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 1762
RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA 2183
RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 4614
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
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RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1267
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000470

SIPDIS

AF/S FOR S. HILL
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU
ADDIS ABABA FOR ACSS
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR E. LOKEN AND L. DOBBINS
STATE PASS TO NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR B. PITTMAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/28/2018
TAGS: PGOV PREL ASEC PHUM ZI
SUBJECT: WITH TSVANGIRAI HOME, OPPOSITION RETURNS TO
CAMPAIGN MODE

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, a.i. Glenn Warren for reason 1.4 (d)

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY. On May 27, Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) presidential candidate Morgan Tsvangirai, who recently returned from a lengthy trip to South Africa focused on regional diplomacy, held a press conference to share his perspective on the current situation in Zimbabwe and outline his party's response. Tsvangirai stated that over 50 people have been killed and at least 25,000 displaced (some 500 of whom sought shelter in MDC headquarters) since the March 29 elections. In response, Tsvangirai announced the launch of the President's Fund for Victims of Violence, intended to assist Zimbabweans impacted by the recent surge in government-sponsored attacks. Tsvangirai repeatedly drove home what appears to be the MDC's mantra for the campaigning days ahead: "The rebuilding of Zimbabwe begins now." Finally back in campaign mode, Tsvangirai's rhetoric suggests he is working hard to reconnect with voters nationwide and plan for transition to MDC rule. Nonetheless, the MDC has a lot of work to do in advance of the June 27 run-off if they hope for a victory. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) On May 27, Tsvangirai held a press conference at his party's headquarters, Harvest House, to share his perspective on the current situation in Zimbabwe and outline his party's response. Tsvangirai condemned the government's violent attacks on civilians and noted over 50 people have been killed and at least 25,000 displaced during the six week period following the March 29 elections. Tsvangirai, who repeatedly referred to himself as the "President" of Zimbabwe, noted in prepared remarks that he had met with victims and their families, including attending the high-profile funeral of a slain MDC activist on Sunday, since returning to Zimbabwe on Saturday.

¶3. (U) In response to the violence, Tsvangirai announced the launch of the President's Fund for Victims of Violence. The fund, which is intended to assist Zimbabweans displaced or orphaned during the recent surge in government-sponsored attacks in the countryside, currently holds \$150 trillion

Zimbabwean dollars (approximately US\$300,000). Tsvangirai called on the Zimbabwean Diaspora and the international community to contribute. The fund will be administered by a board made up of civil society and church leaders, chaired by Eleanor Sisulu, daughter-in-law of ANC icon Walter Sisulu and coordinator of the South African office of Crisis Coalition of Zimbabwe, an NGO umbrella group.

¶ 14. (U) Tsvangirai also revealed that two additional funds will be "launched by the MDC Government in July" once the runoff is completed. The first will be for victims of Operation Murambatsvina, a 2005 government campaign to destroy opposition strongholds that left some 700,000 displaced. The second will be for victims of Operation Gukurahundi, massacres in the early 1980s in Matabeleland directed against the minority Ndebele population, also ordered by Mugabe to curb resistance to his government, that left an estimated 20,000 dead. Tsvangirai repeatedly drove home what appears to be the MDC's mantra for the campaigning days ahead: "The rebuilding of Zimbabwe begins now."

¶ 15. (SBU) Separately, poloff was told by MDC communications staff that over 500 internally displaced persons (IDPs) were still living on the first floor of Harvest House, many of whom have been there for over a month. (NOTE: Mission is currently exploring way to assist displaced victims of politically-motivated violence. END NOTE.) Poloff observed many of the displaced and noted that there were large numbers of women and children among them. The MDC staffer stated that while two meals a day were being provided by civil society organizations, the need for sanitation facilities remained

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acute. The staffer lamented that the IDPs were still in MDC offices and stated that the party was searching for a better location to house them. A number of the displaced were allowed to sit in on the press conference and afterwards photographers were given access to the main room where they were being held.

¶ 16. (SBU) When asked if the MDC remained concerned that security forces would again raid Harvest House following increased publicity about the IDPs, the staffer demurred, noting that ZANU-PF discovered in the last raid that most of the IDPs were ordinary citizens and not opposition activists. Most were released after being held for several days by Harare police, after which the MDC staffer reported that most returned to Harvest House seeking shelter. The staffer did not expect the Mugabe regime to waste time and resources on a second raid. (NOTE: Security forces raided Harvest House and arrested over 200 individuals seeking sanctuary from violence on April 25. END NOTE)

¶ 17. (C) COMMENT. Now that he has returned to Zimbabwe, Tsvangirai appears to be looking ahead and working hard to demonstrate his leadership qualities, reconnect with traumatized rural voters, plan for transition to MDC rule, and regain the trust of skeptical Zimbabweans (and traditional opposition supporters) in civil society and the media who questioned his lengthy absence. With a national address reportedly planned for later this week and the expected launch of a three-week bus tour of Zimbabwe, the MDC is finally back in campaign mode and providing counter-points to ZANU-PF's widespread campaign strategy. Whether the MDC will be able to turn out the opposition vote, effectively monitor polling stations on election day, and penetrate areas currently locked down by Mugabe's security forces in time for the June 27 run-off is yet to be seen. END COMMENT.
Warren